



**Transforming Music Study from Its Foundations:  
A Manifesto for Progressive Change in the  
Undergraduate Preparation of Music Majors**

Report of the Task Force on the  
Undergraduate Music Major

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2013, Patricia Shehan Campbell, President of the College Music Society, appointed a national task force to consider what it means to be an educated musician in the twenty-first century and to make recommendations for progressive change in the undergraduate music major curriculum. Over eighteen months, the task force met to craft a rationale and recommendations for advancing undergraduate preparation of music majors. The Task Force on the Undergraduate Music Major (TFUMM) considered graduates' potential for successful participation and leadership in contemporary and evolving musical cultures. Moreover, given the many challenges and opportunities facing professional musicians today, particularly in the classical music realm, TFUMM considered musicians' roles in public life and how the curriculum might better reflect relevant needs, qualities, knowledge, and skills.

The creative and expressive dimensions of music have been progressing rapidly over the past several decades. Factors include an expanding, interconnected global society with cross-cultural influences and crossover stylistic expressions; performance and production happening in electronic as well as acoustic modes; advances in technology; access to and transmission of music through the internet and digital media; and growing creative impulses for many musicians in the form of improvisatory and compositional endeavors. The task force sees these evolutionary changes in two ways: 1) as untold opportunities for musicians to embrace the ubiquity of music fascination across populations and society; and 2) as a return to fundamentals of musical understanding, craft, and artistic expression that have been largely absent from longstanding models of university music curriculum.

There have been repeated calls for change to ensure that musical curricular content and skill development remain relevant to music outside the academy. The academy, however, has been resistant, remaining isolated and, too frequently, regressive rather than progressive in its approach to undergraduate education. While *surface change* has occurred to some extent through additive means (that is, simply providing more courses, more requirements, and more elective opportunities), *fundamental change* (that is, in priorities, values, perspectives, and implementation) has not occurred. TFUMM has concluded that without fundamental change, traditional music departments, schools, and conservatories could face declining enrollments if sophisticated high school students were to seek music career development outside the often-rarefied environment and curricula characteristic of America's colleges and universities.

Considering observations (by TFUMM and others) regarding dichotomies between "music in the real world" and "music in the academy," TFUMM has fashioned its recommendations on three key pillars necessary to ensure the relevance and rigor of the undergraduate music curriculum. These three pillars are *creativity*, *diversity*, and *integration*.

TFUMM takes the position that creativity (defined for purposes of this report as rooted in the ability to improvise and compose) provides a stronger basis for educating musicians than does interpretation (the prevailing model of training performers in the interpretation of existing works). This position does not suggest there is no longer a place for interpretive performance in the emergent vision; but suggests that when this important practice is reintegrated into a foundation of systematic improvisation and composition, new levels of vitality and excellence are possible in the interpretive performance domain. Such an integrated approach will inevitably engage students more fully with the world in which they live and will work.

Concurrently, this integrated approach will fulfill the aims of the second pillar of our recommended curriculum: diversity. Students need to engage with music of diverse cultures and to engage with the ways that creative expression (including movement) underlies music across the globe. TFUMM takes the position that in a global society, students must experience music of diverse cultures, generations, and social contexts through study *and* direct participation. TFUMM believes that to cultivate a genuine, cross-cultural musical

and social awareness the music curriculum must be infused with diverse influences, and that the primary locus for cultivation of this awareness is the infusion of diverse influences in the creative artistic voice

Thirdly, TFUMM asserts that the content of the undergraduate music curriculum must be integrated at deep levels and in ways that advance understanding, interpretive performance, and creativity as a holistic foundation of growth. Thus, integration is the third pillar of our reformed undergraduate curriculum.

In addition to changes within music, teaching and learning are also evolving. Recent research about perception, cognition, and motivation to learn is at odds with much traditional music instruction. TFUMM thus urges that students be more engaged with curricular planning, and that their preparation should fit logically with the likelihood of opportunities for employment. Such professionally focused content might include learning to talk about music as well as to perform it, to share research in understandable ways, to value and engage with diverse constituencies, to develop new models of concert performance that bridge performer-audience barriers, or to lead arts organizations seeking to diversify their audiences.

In line with the three pillars for curriculum change and considerations about teaching and learning, TFUMM offers a series of recommendations for change that encompass every facet of the undergraduate curriculum—from private lessons to large ensembles; from foundational theory and history in the academy to creative, diverse, and integrative applications in career contexts. This report invites those who are committed to enlivening undergraduate music curriculum for the twenty-first century to join with the task force in proposing and implementing change that serves the needs of today's and tomorrow's music majors. Most importantly, TFUMM believes that these changes will serve the greater goals of widespread valuing of and commitment to the role music plays in making us both human and humane.

## READING THE REPORT IN CONTEXT

Given the precedents that have guided higher music education in the United States over the past century, TFUMM recognizes that some of the perspectives and recommendations in this report could rouse argument about fundamentals in the education of twenty-first-century musicians. Respectful argument over these issues is a potential means of progress. The task force urges readers to keep in mind the report's goal of engendering important, perhaps crucial, dialogue. The following points can help contextualize the report for local dialogues and actions:

- The report urges curricular considerations founded on the three pillars of creativity, diversity, and integration. Thoroughly defining these concepts would take three documents just as long as this one; therefore, in the interest of brevity, the task force trusts that the definitions emerge clearly from the text. Fleshing out these definitions might, in the future, be essential to implementing TFUMM's proposals.
- Some readers might question whether the report's suggestions on musicianship constitute an attack on the way music theory is currently taught in schools of music. This is not TFUMM's intent. Rather, the task force posits that the teaching of theory, as an integral component of a cohesive undergraduate curriculum, could benefit from continuing dialogue about the change proposed.
- Some readers might feel the report substitutes a current form of hegemony (that of the interpretive performer) with another (the improviser-composer-performer), still leaving other music disciplines (music education and scholarship, for example) on the margins of the undergraduate program. TFUMM, in fact, argues that focusing on creativity, diversity, and integration will bring too-frequently marginalized disciplines into the mainstream curriculum in an organic and necessary way. This is analogous to TFUMM's argument that the proposed model will lead organically to essential encounters with the diverse musics of the world and toward seeking ways to integrate the curriculum around the foundational skills that a musician in the twenty-first century will need. These skills include the ability to improvise; to compose music relevant to the times; to perform well; to teach

effectively; and to think critically about the role of music, realizing all of its contemporary and historical diversity.

- This document argues that African-derived musics, including jazz, offer unparalleled opportunities to fashion the identity of the improviser-composer-performer. TFUMM acknowledges, however, that this potential also exists in European classical music and many folk, popular, and classical traditions from other parts of the world.
- Some might read this document as advocating for a reduction in the number of hours allocated to large ensemble instruction in the curriculum. TFUMM acknowledges that if the underlying principles of this report are adopted, questions of time and credits will inevitably arise—not only for large ensembles, but for all elements of the curriculum. TFUMM is emphatically *not* advocating a one-size-fits-all solution to these sorts of issues. Time and credit issues must be debated and resolved locally.

TFUMM submits this report to The College Music Society and to the profession of higher music education as a whole, in hopes of catalyzing robust conversations, encouraging curricular innovations, and undertaking the difficult but rewarding work of programmatic change. We believe the time has come to ensure the ongoing well-being of our students, our institutions, and the art of music that we all love.

## PREAMBLE

This report of the College Music Society Task Force on the Undergraduate Music Major (TFUMM) represents a strong consensus among the members of the task force on the need for fundamental change in the undergraduate music curriculum, on some basic principles for a new approach to music curricula in the twenty-first century, and on pathways for implementing these recommendations in the future.

TFUMM expresses gratitude to Ed Sarath for taking on the burden of being the primary writer of this document, with content and editorial input from the TFUMM members.

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## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN EDUCATED MUSICIAN IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY?

What are the central issues related to being a musician in the 21st century? How might they compare with issues raised a generation or even a century ago? How might one assess the litany of appeals for reform of music in higher education that have arisen over the past 50 years? Have these appeals generated substantive strides forward or merely rearranged the curricular surface? What contributions can music study make to broader educational and societal issues, including cultural diversity, multidisciplinary understanding, transdisciplinary understanding, and ecological and cultural sustainability and social justice?

In 2013, College Music Society President Patricia Shehan Campbell charged the Task Force on the Undergraduate Music Major (TFUMM) with critical examination of these and related questions about the state of college- and university-level music study. It was her belief (as well as others') that the world into which today's students will graduate is vastly different from the world around which the field has typically been conceived. Contemporary musical practices beyond the academy are often centered on creative, cross-cultural engagement and synthesis emblematic of the societies in which those practices flourish; yet contemporary, tertiary-level music study (with interpretive performance and analysis of European classical repertory at its center) remains lodged in a cultural, aesthetic, and pedagogical paradigm that is notably out of step with this broader reality.

Following a year and a half of consultation, TFUMM has concluded that fundamental overhaul of university-level music study is necessary to bridge the divide between academic music study and the musical world into which our students and students of future years will graduate. TFUMM views the following themes as central when considering this fundamental overhaul: 1) the essential purpose of music study, 2) the nature of foundational musical

experiences and understandings, and 3) the content and delivery of a relevant yet rigorous curriculum that prepares students for musical engagement and leadership in an age of unprecedented excitement and avenues for growth. TFUMM believes that nothing short of rebuilding the conventional music education model from its foundations will suffice for preparation of 21st-Century musicians.

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*Significant change is essential if we are to bridge the divide between academic music study and the musical world into which our students and the students of future years will graduate.*

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Understandably, a call for paradigmatic change might evoke concern about compromised integrity or achievement in conventional areas, or about the potential devaluing of the European tradition. TFUMM takes the opposite position: The creative, diverse, and integrated model it recommends will yield new levels of rigor, excellence, meaning, and transformative vitality in both conventional and newer areas of music study. Rather than subordinating the European tradition, TFUMM advocates a close critical reading of this tradition. A close reading will reveal that the European tradition is grounded in an integrated and creative process that includes, among its most revered practitioners, the skills of improvisation, composition, and performance, and in some cases theorizing and pedagogy. This collection of skills is precisely what is needed to navigate and flourish professionally in today's infinite array of culturally diverse music. If Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Schumann, and Liszt were alive today, their musical lives would more likely resemble today's creative jazz artists (and other improvisers-composers-performers) than the interpretive performance

specialists whose repertory was created in and for another time and place. From this standpoint, the longstanding conventional model of music study in vogue throughout tertiary programs actually represents a departure from the European classical tradition. TFUMM proposes a return to the authentic roots of this heritage in a way that is relevant for current musical lives. The kind of contemporary, creative exploration and synthesis that TFUMM proposes is not antithetical to traditional grounding or deep musical understanding. Rather it enhances and reinforces artistic rigor, authenticity, and relevance. For these reasons, TFUMM is committed to new, more inclusive, critical levels of change discourse.<sup>1</sup>

This document summarizes the key issues reviewed by TFUMM and invites further dialogue and action in response to its recommendations. Part I provides a rationale for the TFUMM project, articulates the basic tenets of the TFUMM vision, and situates it within the long legacy of appeals for change in the field, elaborating how its wide-ranging and provocative scope differs from prior reform initiatives.

Part II recommends practical strategies to be implemented by those committed to charting new terrain and assuming leadership in the broad transformation of the field that is envisioned. Both local, institutional and national/ international strategies are addressed. Although TFUMM advocates systemic change, we also recognize

challenges inherent in this project; thus, we delineate a range of strategies that could drive both incremental and larger scale changes within this vision.

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*...the longstanding conventional model of music study in vogue throughout tertiary programs actually represents a radical departure from the European classical tradition. TFUMM proposes a return to the authentic roots of this heritage...*

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Part III concludes the document with an emphasis on the extraordinary opportunity that awaits those individuals and institutions that are driven by a love for all music, a pioneering spirit, and the courage to forge new vistas in music study that are appropriate to the present moment in musical practice and society.

TFUMM hopes that readers of this report will share the optimism and excitement about the possibilities inherent in its recommendations. It is time for academic music study to take its next evolutionary strides and to produce a new generation of artist-visionaries who will contribute a transformative worldview for 21st-century life.

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<sup>1</sup> Argyris's and Schön's notion of "double-loop learning"—where institutional change efforts penetrate to the very assumptions on which goals, objectives, and strategies are based—is instructive. Double-loop learning embodies elevated critical scrutiny and the potential to circumvent typical polarizations between convention and change, even

when foundational transformation of the type TFUMM recommends is at play. (Argyris, C., & Schön, D. 1978. *Organizational learning: A theory of action perspective*. Reading MA: Addison Wesley.)



## I. WHY THE CMS TASK FORCE?

Over the past half century, thoughtful musicians and educators have examined the state of music in a wide array of educational contexts and discussed instructional experiences of greatest value for developing musicians—musicians who perform, invent, analyze, interpret, and facilitate music in the lives of others. These discussions led to proposed reforms of musical study. Some of the key “moments” in this ongoing discussion include The Young Composers Project (1959–1962), The Yale Seminar (1962), the Contemporary Music Project (1963–1973), the Comprehensive Musicianship Project (1965–1971), the Manhattanville Music Curriculum Project (1966–1970), the Tanglewood Symposium (1967), the Music in General Studies—A Wingspread Conference (1981), the Multicultural Music Education Symposium (1990), the National Standards for the Arts–Music (1994), and the National Core Music Standards (2014). Various documents from these gatherings have declared pathways to improve ways of teaching and learning music. The National Association of Schools of Music 2010 report, “Creative Approaches to the Undergraduate Curriculum,” raises some useful questions for thinking about curriculum leadership and potential change.<sup>2</sup> K-12 school music transformation is the target of many of these efforts, but they also resonate at the tertiary level where preparing music majors for careers that include teaching is a significant thrust of activity.

In light of this long line of reform efforts, why the need for yet another initiative? The answer is simple: despite these past efforts, change has been confined largely to surface adjustments—what might be best characterized as “curricular tinkering”—at the expense of the systemic, foundational overhaul that is necessary. This is not to deny the emergence of coursework and programs that appear to bridge the gulf between academic and

real world musical engagement—programs in jazz, ethnomusicology, world music performance, music technology, popular music, community music, music business, entrepreneurship, and other areas. Nor is it to ignore the inventories that identify courses that need to be added to an already full curriculum. Rather, it is to acknowledge that these and other additive attempts at change have left the conventional curricular and cultural core largely intact, and left newer areas on the periphery.

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*New offerings atop an unchanging foundation has not only placed additional stress on the conventional curricular foundations, but has reified the divide between music study and real-world musical practice*

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Bruno Nettl observed that while musical academe has expanded the range of music studied within its borders, it has not significantly enabled the majority of students to access that range.<sup>3</sup> Nor has the academy taken to heart the multidisciplinary nature of the musical experience that embraces artistic expression, behaviors, and values that manifest themselves with dance and dramatic expression in cultures across the globe.

The recognition of the need for greater breadth in music training is not new, but effective ways to achieve that breadth have been elusive. Indeed, it might be argued that the scattering of new offerings atop an unchanging foundation (which was never designed to support engagement beyond the European tradition) has not only placed additional stress on the conventional curricular foundations,

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<sup>2</sup> For an excellent survey of various reform initiatives, see Mark, M. and C. Gary (2007). *A History of American Music Education*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

<sup>3</sup> Nettl, B. (1995). *Heartland Excursions: Ethnomusicological Reflections on Schools of Music*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

but has also reified the divide between music study and real-world music practice. TFUMM brings to the change endeavor not only great appreciation for prior efforts but also a keen critical analysis of their shortcomings, new principles upon which a new model can be built, and an unprecedented range of practical strategies (both institutional and national/international in scope) through which the new vision might become a reality.

## PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS: THREE CORE PILLARS FOR REFORM

TFUMM identifies three core deficiencies in the conventional model of music study, and in response, three core pillars emerge for an entirely new framework. The first core deficiency is subordination of the creation of new work to the interpretive performance of older work; the second is ethnocentrism; and the third is fragmentation of subjects and skills. When these tendencies are reversed, the three core pillars of a transformed model come into view: creativity, diversity, and integration.

### CREATIVITY

One of the most startling shortcomings in all of arts education is that **too many** music students graduate with little to no experience or significant grounding in the essential creative processes of improvisation and composition. In contrast, students majoring in the visual arts could not gain a degree without producing a portfolio of original creative work. Yet for music graduates, a lack of skill or even cursory experience in composition and improvisation is the norm rather than the exception.<sup>4</sup> Ironically, although appeals for inclusion of the arts in education are often grounded in the need to cultivate creativity in all students, music study has long been predicated on the subordination of creativity to technical proficiency and interpretive performance.

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<sup>4</sup> This analogy is not made oblivious to the absence of a parallel in the visual arts to interpretive performance in music, which in itself represents a subset of the broader and more foundational creative spectrum that TFUMM values. Nevertheless, it is also important to note the conspicuous absence of primary creative engagement, which improvising and composing embody.

Over the past decade and a half, faculty, institutions, and organizations concerned with higher music education have made important efforts to incorporate more creative experience and diverse musical styles into the curriculum. Faculty advocating change have represented every field of music, including theory, musicology/ethnomusicology, performance, and music education. Most agree, however, that resulting advances have not permeated the overall curriculum as widely as might be hoped, and that continuing work is essential.

Improvising and composing are common in many change appeals, particularly at the pre-collegiate level, but recommendations are usually framed through an additive lens. The existing foundation remains largely inflexible, and provision for core creative experiences is limited to remaining space. TFUMM takes the critical step of advocating that the entire music study enterprise should be rebuilt around systematic approaches to these creative processes.<sup>5</sup>

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A systematic program of improvisation study may unite multiple improvisatory languages, including style-specific (for example, jazz, Hindustani, or European classical) and stylistically open approaches. Such study would provide for creative exploration and analysis and reflection on a wide range of modal-tonal-post-tonal pitch systems<sup>6</sup> and rhythmic practices. At the same time, studies could

<sup>5</sup> For more on systematic approaches to improvisation and composition, see Sarath, E. (2013). *Improvisation, Creativity, and Consciousness: Jazz as Integral Template for Music, Education, and Society*. Albany, NY: SUNY.

<sup>6</sup> Here and throughout the document, the modal-tonal-post-tonal spectrum aims toward the wide-ranging pitch systems that derive from European classical, jazz, popular, and other genres. Though the post-tonal portion of this

embrace training in aural performance, movement processes, history, culture, aesthetics, cognition, and mind-body integration. The development of technical skill and knowledge required for expert improvisatory development has ramifications for both conventional interpretive performance and contemporary musical explorations. Systematic composition studies that intertwine European-tradition concert music practices with songwriting approaches from popular music and small and large ensemble jazz composition strategies expand the creative process spectrum in ways that are relevant to both traditional and contemporary music.

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*...improvisation and composition uniquely promote assimilation of influences from the musical landscape into the emergent artistic voice, thereby enabling levels of intimacy, meaning, and understanding that are not possible when interpretive performance alone is the prescribed mode of engagement...*

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Therefore, TFUMM seeks to restore improvisation and composition to their rightful, foundational status, not by subordinating performance and analysis, but by rendering the entire scope of music study as a creative and highly-skilled endeavor. Some readers might misinterpret our position as the replacing of one form of hegemony, that of the interpretive performer, with another, that of the improviser-composer-performer, still leaving the study of music education and music scholarship on the margins. In fact, the task force holds that pursuing a curriculum that encourages improvising, composing, and performing will bring now-marginalized disciplines into the mainstream of music study in an organic and necessary way. The proposed approach has the capacity to promote new levels of vitality and excellence in interpretive performance. It also yields a framework conducive to a range of areas currently underrepresented in

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spectrum might most immediately elicit associations with twelve-tone and other atonal strategies that evolved in 20<sup>th</sup> century European-inspired composition, of equal if not greater importance are the use of octatonic, whole-tone,

the curriculum. One example might be the embodied nature of musical engagement. Embodied engagement has roots in the inextricable link between music, dance, ritual, and dramatic expression that is central to cultures across the globe, and we are seeing a revival in mind-body interest in contemporary society. TFUMM believes that cultivation of the experience of music as a whole-body phenomenon is essential to a broader conception of musical knowing and expression.

## DIVERSITY

The second deficiency is the ethnocentric orientation of music studies, which carries enormous societal ramifications. Once rectified, the resulting change opens important avenues of learning.

Similar to the gap noted in creativity, large numbers of music majors graduate with little or no hands-on engagement with music beyond European classical repertory, let alone the cultivation of a genuine global artistic identity, which TFUMM believes is central to musical life and responsible citizenship. The extent of the problem is underscored by the fact that music majors commonly spend many years on campus without even a nod to the multicultural communities surrounding them, and that practitioners from these communities are rarely invited to engage with university students of music. Moreover, this ethnocentric lapse occurs on campuses where commitment to diversity and equality are regularly articulated by the administration, and where robust diversity discourse pervades the humanities and social sciences. The dichotomy between administrative rhetoric and curricular reality underscores the as institutional nature of the problem. TFUMM views the culturally narrow horizons of music study as nothing short of a social justice crisis.

So, complementary to the call for a creativity-based curriculum, TFUMM urges that engagement occur within a cultural expanse that is as broad as possible. Within this expanded context, it will be important to distinguish between contact with the global nature of the musical world through an identity as an

bitonal and other practices that do not fall readily into modal or tonal categories.

interpretive performance specialist and contact through the identity of a contemporary improviser-composer-performer. The latter identity incorporates capacities for assimilation and synthesis of diverse influences that nurture intimate connections, rather than a distanced fascination, with the rich diversity of the musical world.

Analyses of the creative process illuminate how improvisation and composition uniquely promote assimilation of influences from the musical landscape into the emergent artistic voice. Thereby levels of intimacy, meaning, and understanding are enabled that are not possible when interpretive performance is the lone mode of engagement.

TFUMM's point is *not* to cast improvisation and composition over music performance (or analysis), nor to deny that creativity is possible in all forms of musical engagement and inquiry. TFUMM's purpose is to achieve a framework in which optimal levels of creativity and excellence are reached in all areas. TFUMM believes that a creativity-based foundation rooted in improvisation and composition study is particularly conducive to this optimal balance.

A creativity-based foundation is key to moving beyond the challenges and allure of what has sometimes been called the "multicultural marketplace," which is characterized by superficial contact with a "bit of this and a bit of that," and achieving an authentic transcultural understanding that is the basis for an entirely new diversity paradigm. When contact with diverse cultures informs and is informed by the emergent creative voice, it can open students to deep celebration and embrace.

## INTEGRATION

The third primary deficiency of both the present curricular framework and prior reform attempts is pervasive fragmentation within the curriculum and organization of music schools. As an antidote, TFUMM endorses an expanded model of integration.

In the conventional curricular model, performance studies are separated from theoretical studies, both of which are taught separately from historical and cultural inquiry. A fractured conception of music is thus promoted, as a collection of discrete "silos" or compartments. Proposed solutions have typically been piecemeal, as for example in exhortations that

music performed in ensembles should be studied in theory and history classes. TFUMM believes these partial strategies might actually perpetuate the problem of fragmentation by reinforcing a limited terrain within which integration is sought. The fact that past attempts have rarely yielded significant gains underscores the limitations inherent in a piecemeal strategy.

Previous efforts to unite theory, history, and performance have thus recognized only a limited slice of the 21st-century musical skill and aptitude set. When creativity is recognized as *core* to the overall spectrum of music study, the model is considerably expanded and gains a basis for unprecedented unification across every facet of musical study. Improvisation and composition contain aspects of performance, theory, aural skills, rhythm, embodied engagement, and historical, cultural, and aesthetic inquiry. The synergistic interplay can be harnessed in new curricular models and integrated in ways that give rise to a host of other important outcomes and areas of study. These outcomes might include heightened capacities for critical thinking, self-sufficiency, community music linkages, entrepreneurship, and an understanding of the relationship of music to broader issues.

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*If genuine integration has been elusive within the narrow horizons of conventional models, the vastly expanded set of culturally-diverse and cross-disciplinary skills and understandings called for in our time renders this essential educational component all the more challenging.*

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Genuine integration has been elusive within the narrow horizons of conventional models. This essential educational component is rendered even more challenging in the face of the vastly expanded set of skills and understandings called for in the 21st century. In advancing a creativity-based paradigm, as opposed to additive strategies that might incorporate creativity, TFUMM sets its proposal apart from prior reform appeals and resolves the paradox between diversity and integration.

## II. WIDE-RANGING PRACTICAL STRATEGIES

TFUMM recognizes the challenges associated with implementing practical solutions to problems in the current undergraduate curriculum and so offers a range of change strategies unprecedented in previous calls for change.

One challenge involves engagement with broad constituencies in and beyond the field of music study. Curricular overhaul cannot occur in isolation; it must involve the many populations that influence and are influenced by it. In music this includes K-12 teachers, principals, and super-intendents, all of whom potentially play key roles in shaping how musical artists and artist-teachers are educated at the tertiary level. In the realm of higher education leadership, deans (beyond music), provosts, presidents, chancellors, and regents represent another constituency typically not included in the dialogue that could significantly impact change in music study. Music students, practicing professional artists, and arts organizations are additional constituencies to be included in the multi-tiered dialogue advanced by TFUMM.

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*It is important to recognize  
that turbulence  
is inherent to change*

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To be sure, the TFUMM vision and this report do, at times, assume an activist tone that might feel unfamiliar or disquieting to some readers. Though the report is not intended to elicit these reactions, it is important to recognize that turbulence—as Thomas Kuhn has elaborated in his study of paradigmatic change in the sciences<sup>7</sup>—is inherent

to the change process. TFUMM thus reaches out to those who sense a need for change, who believe that change is possible, and who desire to find a way forward through the dynamic, sometimes even tumultuous, interplay between creative exploration and rigorous grounding in musical knowledge and skill. Inasmuch as music is ubiquitous across the globe and that few, if any, cultures are not enriched by the creative syncretism that increasingly defines the planetary musical landscape, TFUMM believes that music study informed by a commitment to creativity, diversity, and integration has the capacity to transform the world. We believe in the important role music making plays in addressing social, cultural, political, economic, and ecological issues facing the world today.

Following are strategies rooted in this vision. Pathways to Change I conveys strategies that might be pursued at the local institutional level. Pathways to Change II presents strategies to be implemented on broader, national or international scales.



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<sup>7</sup> Kuhn, T. (1962). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

## PATHWAYS TO CHANGE I: INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

To overcome the inertia of established programs and cultures dominated by interpretive performance and study of European classical music, a new integrated program—replete with creativity and diversity and still including the treasures of European heritage—will require not only curricular overhaul but new ways of thinking, conversing, and forging strategic initiatives.

TFUMM recommends three kinds of change activities at the institutional level: initiate ongoing conversations, establish self-organizing mechanisms, and deploy designs for new courses.

- Initiate an ongoing conversation committed to critical scrutiny of both conventional and alternative models of music study. If needed reform is to come to fruition, it is important that such conversations take place within traditionally organized governance mechanisms (such as curriculum committees) and in a range of other formats. Other formats could include faculty-student reflective groups, cluster discussions, task forces, or forums all charged with study, serious reflection, and critical thinking regarding curricular and instructional issues.
- Establish self-organizing mechanisms whereby dynamic and critical approaches to conservation and change become intrinsic to institutional discourse and behavior. The option-rich curriculum is a key example of such a mechanism; in it students—and by extension, faculty—are given latitude and responsibility for charting their own pathways. If an institution faces resistance to opening student options, enhanced options might initially be established within an existing program frame, much like charter schools operate within the K-12 system. TFUMM views provisions for options as “bottom-up” strategies, in that the changes are generated from the student level.
- Deploy carefully considered, “top down” (institution driven) designs for new courses and curriculums.

TFUMM advocates that institutions explore bottom-up and top-down approaches in tandem, so the

transformative impact of each informs the other. In the following sections we provide some examples of applications. In doing so, TFUMM does not presume to prescribe particular manifestations to be followed in every detail. Rather, TFUMM views its primary contribution to be the articulation of core principles; applications are identified to illustrate the principles, not to prescribe a universal pathway. In keeping with its advocacy for creativity in student learning, TFUMM urges institutions to be creative in their adoption of the principles, particularly relative to each institution’s distinctive identity. The interplay of top-down and bottom-up approaches is therefore advanced as a principle under which any number of applications may be possible.

TFUMM is advocating wide-scale reform, but recognizes that change typically happens incrementally. Institutions are encouraged to take what steps they can. However, TFUMM also challenges institutions to think carefully about differences between small steps that merely add to the prevailing model and incur arguments that the curriculum is already too full, and small steps that are taken with an entirely new paradigm in sight. By keeping in mind the far-reaching vision TFUMM has set forth, even the smallest steps forward will be imbued with meaning, purpose, and direction.

### Strategy 1: New Conversations

Change in practice requires change in thinking. Essential to this change is a sustained level of critical discourse that penetrates to the foundational premises of TFUMM’s recommendations. Discussions should probe how TFUMM’s premises might inform the conventional model and alternative approaches. The following guiding questions may help elevate the level of critical discourse and set the stage for corresponding change.

- What does it mean to be an educated individual in the 21st century?
- What does it mean to be an educated, reflective musician in the 21st century?
- What are the justifications for placing creativity and creative development front and center in programs?
- In this global age and society, what justifications exist for infusing global practices and inquiry in music curricula?

- How can programs thrive in contexts that proffer impassioned pronouncements of diversity and social justice if they fail to embrace the diversity of the broader musical world, especially nearby music communities?
- How might some longstanding musical worldviews constrain thinking about change and approaches to change?
- What worldviews, both existing and evolving, might enlarge and enrich visions for music study?
- Why, after over 50 years of appeals for reform, have we not witnessed more substantive curricular change in music?
- Why did the improviser-composer-performer identity that prevailed earlier in the European tradition give way to the interpretive performance specialist identity? What would a curriculum look like that was built around the return of the first profile? How might that curriculum enhance excellence and vitality in conventional approaches to music making? In what ways might it be essential to the future of European classical music?
- What impact might Cartesian mind-body dualism have on the fragmentation of mind and body, as well as on the curriculum, in conventional music study? How might this fragmentation be replaced by a holistic approach to musical experience with multiple modalities for physical engagement and disciplinary synthesis? How might the African concept of *ngoma* (in which the links between musical sound, dance, dramatic expression, and ritual are inextricable) inform a new model of music study?



- What would it look like to organize a music school or department around comprehensive creative, diverse, and integrated values (including interpretive performance) as opposed to the current scheme centralized on interpretive performance and the analysis and sociocultural understanding of interpretive performance?

These questions will elicit reflection, insights, and potential receptivity to substantive change. Those responses will be enhanced when discourse is grounded in related literature. Although relevant research on music learning and cognition may not be a typical part of curriculum committee deliberations or faculty conversations about music learning, a wide range of resources is available and could elevate the critical integrity of these deliberations. The literature includes qualitative and quantitative studies on learning and music learning, neurocognitive research that supports hands-on and integrative approaches to learning, a growing body of diversity literature, and history of reform movements in music study and education at large. Critical examination of conventional and alternative models of music learning through many lenses—scope, integration, diversity, self-sufficiency, embodied musicianship, use of terminology and language—can also elevate the level and integrity of change discourse.

Close attention to various approaches to paradigmatic change is also in order. The following questions can further that discussion.

- How will the kind of transformation called for in this report manifest itself?
- Will change entail wholesale redesign of every course, or might it involve a redistribution of subject matter already in place, with perhaps some bottom-up new design?
- Will change require the immediate transformation of an entire school or department, or might it begin with the establishment of pilot tracks that embody new principles?
- Will emphasis be given to content and process in large-scale programmatic transformation as well as in individual classes, rehearsals, and studio sessions?

- What are the benefits and drawbacks to top-down (institution driven) strategies and bottom-up (student driven) strategies?
- What are the benefits and drawbacks of allowing faculty from diverse areas to offer coursework that fulfills core requirements typically taught by specialists in those areas?

## Strategy 2: Self-organizing (Bottom-up) Mechanisms

Provisions for students to navigate their own curricular pathways has taken hold in many areas of the academy, but is still foreign to conventional music study. Such provisions have also eluded significant attention in music reform discourse. TFUMM, however, views curricular strategies incorporating options as a powerful means for enhancing musical and personal growth, particularly when situated within the proposed three-pronged change protocol. The bottom-up reform endorsed here should not be an isolated strategy; it should be implemented in conjunction with top-down, institution-driven approaches that involve new course and curriculum design and, potentially, new school-wide requirements.

In a musical world bustling with change, we must question curricular frameworks that limit students' responsibility for their own development and for their exploration of music in real-world contexts. When students are given options, they think more critically about who they are as individuals, as aspiring artists, and as learners. Moreover, when institutions allow students more options, conditions are created that enliven faculty creativity as faculty design new classes to meet new student interests. This may in turn enliven important self-monitoring capacities within the institution. Option-deficient curricular models guarantee full enrollments regardless of the relevance or vitality of the classes that are offered; however, option-rich frameworks usher in new parameters of accountability as students choose to enroll in more relevant and vital classes. These approaches can also help decentralize curricular authority by blurring boundaries between disciplinary areas when newly formed student/faculty constituencies engage in creative problem solving related to class offerings.

It is important to emphasize that students and faculty inclined toward conventional pathways will retain the capacity to pursue those pathways.

“Options” does not mean obliteration of what is currently in place; it simply addresses the need for diversification and enhances students' ownership around whatever pathways they choose. Provision for options enhances student ownership and sense-of-being around whatever pathways they may choose, as opposed to having limiting pathways imposed upon their learning. Empowering students to discover their own learning styles and artistic aims and to chart their developmental pathways accordingly must be considered among today's most important educational goals, regardless of discipline. When students are empowered, powerful interior connections with knowledge areas can be enlivened; and, again, knowledge areas may include conventional and unconventional realms. The result will be levels of meaning and rigor that exceed the current institution-driven format. TFUMM identifies three option-rich strategies for bottom-up curricular change.

### Streamlining

One involves reducing the number of core requirements and allowing students greater latitude in the space that is opened up. TFUMM prefers the term *streamlining* to *reducing*, because reducing suggests students might be gaining less grounding than needed when, in fact, the proposed framework may result in equal or even greater grounding. For example, if the typical two to three years of core theory and music history coursework are streamlined into a one-year core in each area, students could then use the remaining credits to pursue further studies. Students might choose the same previously required coursework in theory and history, but they would now select it from an expanded slate of options. Their chosen curriculum might include coursework that covers important





theoretical and historical terrain offered by faculty or areas not typically associated with these areas, for example opera faculty teaching theoretical content based on operatic examples or an ethnomusicologist teaching temporally parallel developments in Western European and Indian music. Carefully designed proficiency protocols for core musicianship areas (delineated with contemporary creative and diverse aims in mind) would help to render approaches that balance choice with developing high degrees of rigor and skill.

Similar flexibility can be implemented in private lessons and ensembles. The systematic and systemic change endorsed by TFUMM calls for critical examination of every facet of the curriculum as a potential gateway to broader, more creative, diverse, and integrated artistry. Guidelines for appropriate distributions of requirements might remain the same within an area, but students would enjoy an enhanced array of opportunities for fulfilling requirements. Students' opportunities would, of course, be somewhat dependent on faculty expertise and willingness to forge new territory with students.

#### ***Departmental determination of requirements***

A second, closely related option-rich strategy involves individual departments or faculty areas being able to determine their own curricular requirements. For example, music education faculty, who best know the needs of music education majors, would be able to determine the curriculum for their students from the core level on up. An important byproduct of this plan would involve provisions for faculty to design the coursework they feel is needed for their students.

#### ***Student proposed pathways***

The third strategy is perhaps the most radical approach within the option-rich protocol. It is intended as a complement to the top-down department- or division-driven approaches. This approach involves allowing students to deviate even from departmental/divisional constraints by assembling a committee of three faculty members to consult, review, and approve a student's proposed

pathway. This approach represents a second-tier decentralization that further empowers students to critically examine their needs, and it impels faculty to critically examine their curricular predilections. When implemented in conjunction with expanded provisions for fulfilling and assessing newly conceived core requirements, this provision could be highly fruitful for a given student's artistic evolution.

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To be sure, the proposed approach is not without potential limitations, and thus TFUMM advocates it as one among a battery of approaches that also includes top-down, institution-driven modalities. For synergistic interplay between these approaches to be productive, difficult questions must be placed front and center in discussions. For example, in musicianship studies that are predicated on sequential skill development typically approached in four (or more) semester sequences, the idea of allowing students to pursue alternative pathways might appear particularly problematic. However, the following questions should be kept in mind: How effective is the present musicianship coursework in terms of enduring, meaningful assimilation of conventional content? How well does it prepare students with the broader slate of creative and culturally diverse abilities called for in today's world?

TFUMM's position is that the numbers of students and faculty expressing concerns about core musicianship suggests that allowing students greater capacity to chart their own pathways might be an essential part of the broader slate of change strategies.<sup>8</sup>

#### **Strategy 3: Institution-Driven (Top-Down) Approaches**

Bottom-up, student-driven reform should be complemented by institution-mediated strategies. The design of new courses and curricular pathways are central to top-down strategies. A newly conceived musicianship core, new degree programs, and new courses need to embody the creativity-

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<sup>8</sup> These concerns around conventional musicianship models may pertain to the absence of effective pedagogy and relevant materials; the focus on harmonic practices of distant eras at the exclusion of melody, rhythm, and harmony in contemporary contexts; the lack of thoughtful

mind-body integration; or to aural training that is non-sequential yet locked into mundane and non-musical exercises or disconnected from meaningful experiences in music.

based, diverse, and integrative nature of contemporary musical practice, which is captured in the TFUMM platform.

### *New core skills and understandings*

A contemporary vision of musicianship requires a new foundation. Delineating what this vision might look like requires, first, a brief overview of the conventional core curriculum for music majors. The conventional core typically includes the following elements.

- 2–3 years of music theory coursework that focuses on harmony, counterpoint, and form in European common practice repertory
- 2 or more years of music history coursework that is similarly oriented toward European heritage
- Private instruction during each term in residence that focuses on developing interpretive performance skills in European or European-derived repertory
- Ensembles, with emphasis on large, conducted groups, that prepare a European-derived repertory for public performance (generally required during each term in residence)
- Piano classes that provide students with rudimentary facility at the keyboard (TFUMM views this as important, even while encouraging critical consideration of the practical functionality of the skills learned in these classes.)

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*Integrative approaches that might include eurhythmic movement and dance need to be regularly featured as potential pedagogical pathways to the holistic understanding of music*

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While all of the listed experiences may be of value, it is important to recognize the large array of experiences and developments often not represented in the core that are equally valuable, and that are, in some instances, more foundational for 21st-century musicianship. Improvisation, composition, hands-on contact with music of diverse traditions, embodied musical practices, and contemporary rhythmic studies are a few key areas,

and all need to be approached in integrative ways. These experiences can provide the basis of a case for the new curricular foundation that is as strong as arguments in support of the conventional model. TFUMM does not view this as an either-or scenario, however. It is an opportunity to arrive at a new foundation that fulfills conventional and emergent needs. Key to that opportunity is identification of principles that underlie a new core curriculum and infiltrate all coursework:

- Creative, hands-on, integrative, and culturally diverse engagement with contemporary music of many kinds,
- inquiry into the past through the lens of the present,
- balance between creative exploration and rigorous development of craft,
- mind-body integration,
- rhythmic studies informed by contemporary, globally-informed practice,
- community engagement, and
- technological applications.

Close linkages between aural, rhythmic, and embodied modalities (situated within broader integrative models that unite creative, performative, theoretical, historical, and cultural engagement) must be emphasized for their potential in constructing a new musicianship core. In this new approach, aural musicianship needs to be emphasized as much as visual literacy. Integrative approaches that might include eurhythmic movement and dance need to be regularly featured as potential pedagogical pathways to the holistic understanding of music, such that music may be deeply known through physical encounters that achieve the integration of ear, body, and brain.

Careful rethinking of coursework that is typically presumed to provide the basic aural and analytic tools required by all musicians (regardless of career aspiration) may be a fertile gateway that opens up to the proposed vision. Writing Bach-style, four-part compositions has long been presumed to be the primary source for skills in tonal harmonic practice. The effectiveness of this approach and its narrow horizons need to be carefully reassessed from a contemporary, creative vantage point. Despite changes advanced in some theory texts and in pedagogical classroom applications, theory and aural skills are still often perceived as divorced from

one another, from performance, and from music history, thus providing impetus for rethinking these facets. The impetus for rethinking takes on a new urgency when the goal is expanded from a specialized interpretive performance within a monocultural repertory to globally informed, improvisation, composition, performance. The point is not to suggest that a conventional approach to music theory should bear the brunt of reform criticism, but to emphasize that if music study is to align itself with the diverse horizons of the musical world, all areas of the curriculum will need to be examined. And basic musicianship—by its very foundational nature—may well require considerable attention. TFUMM is optimistic that powerful new models of musicianship can emerge from this reexamination process, models that are consistent with TFUMM’s overarching commitment to the integration of conventional areas within an expanded scope.

Though delineating specific course content in response to these points is beyond TFUMM’s scope, we encourage thoughtful consideration about potential openings to a broader foundation in musicianship. For example, a particularly fertile opening could be the prominence of black music in American culture and in global musical practices. Christopher Small’s work has been especially influential in ethnomusicology and music education; he emphasizes African and African American models of “musicking”<sup>9</sup>—with their limitless diasporic expressions, such as Afro-Cuban, Afro-Columbian, Afro-Brazilian, Afro-Bolivian, and Afro-Mexican styles—as key to a viable model of musicianship in a global musical landscape. Jazz and much popular music are prominent within these traditions, and when approached as self-transcending gateways that connect with the



broader musical landscape, they can bring powerful tools to 21st century musical foundations.

Jazz in particular provides a rich spectrum of diatonic and non-diatonic studies that includes applied chords, modal mixtures, altered harmonies, and chord extensions. These intersect with key European common practice structures yet also encompass a modal-tonal-post-tonal spectrum that connects with today’s musical world. Adding jazz’s improvisatory and compositional creative scope to the mix unites important

content areas with the process foundations advocated by TFUMM. Music theory becomes an applied endeavor integrated directly into students’ musical expression and understanding.

The case for black music as a core resource (not as a replacement for, but as a means for connecting with European and other sources) is further strengthened when contemporary rhythmic practices are considered. Here Jeff Pressing’s study of the germinal importance of “Black Atlantic Rhythm”<sup>10</sup> in global musical practice aligns with Small’s vision and adds weight to the argument. George Lewis’s inclusive differentiation of Afrological and Eurological streams in contemporary musical practice might also be noted in support of this thinking.<sup>11</sup>

Again, TFUMM emphasizes that the point is not in any way to endorse the *replacement* of the current Eurocentric aesthetic-pedagogical model with one that is Afrocentric; rather the point is to underscore the importance of stepping back from conventional, conditioned perspectives of musical genres and perceiving those genres as waves in the 21st-century musical ocean. Improvisatory-compositional grounding is significant to the jazz portion of the Afrological wave, arguably linking it more closely to

<sup>9</sup> Small, C. (1987). *Music of the Common Tongue*. London: Calder Riverrun. (Patricia Shehan Campbell conveys from a personal conversation with Small toward the end of his life that of his three books, this one uniquely captures the heart of his thought on the importance of African-derived forms, even though this point has eluded recognition even among many of his followers.)

<sup>10</sup> Pressing, J. (2002). “Black Atlantic Rhythm: Its Computational and Transcultural Foundations,” *Music Perception* 19, 3: 285-310.

<sup>11</sup> Lewis, G. (2008). *A Power Stronger Than Itself: The AACM and American Experimental Music*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

past eras of European practice than to the conventional interpretive performance specialist framework. This link serves as a primary example of the important, if provocative, insights that are unearthed in TFUMM's expanded, critically robust perspective.

This reemergent, creativity-based paradigm has the capacity to transcend its own boundaries and enhance a much broader synthesis—where Afrological, Eurological, and multitudes of other waves unite. TFUMM sees the necessity for this synthesis to assume center stage in reform discourse. Therefore, TFUMM acknowledges that African-derived musics (including jazz) offer unparalleled and mostly missed opportunities to fashion the identity of the globally-oriented, contemporary, improviser-composer-performer. Our overarching aim is to not privilege any given area but to illuminate inherent capacities in all genres—including European classical music and folk, popular, and classical traditions from other parts of the world. All genres can serve as gateways to the broader musical landscape.

Although TFUMM has directed much of its critique implicitly and explicitly toward the European-based emphasis in academic music studies, we believe mainstream jazz education will also benefit by embracing and incorporating broader connections. Indeed, the veering of jazz education from the creative foundations of the jazz tradition parallels, and is arguably inherited from, the veering of European classical music studies from the creative foundations of the European tradition.<sup>12</sup>

TFUMM also recognizes concerns regarding teaching qualifications that arise from the kind of change proposed in core musicianship and music history studies. A commitment to such reformed approaches will likely entail professional development for faculty, perhaps through enhanced interactions with faculty not usually assigned core musicianship studies or through master classes and workshops related to creativity, diversity, and integration (which TFUMM argues should permeate the curriculum). A philosophical commitment and a desire to incorporate new processes and content into conventional programs will be necessary. Often,

deeply inspired teaching comes from those who are themselves avid learners, willing to enhance their own knowledge and skill to increase their relevance and service to students who will perform, teach, and research in the years to come.

### *Three approaches for top-down reform of core musicianship*

TFUMM envisions three possible approaches to institution-driven reform of core musicianship. These can be pursued independently or in conjunction with bottom-up, option-rich approaches.

The first approach involves a theory and aural skills class based on TFUMM's recommended principles, where jazz, popular, global, and classical European practices and materials are integrated with studies of improvisation, composition, rhythm, and skill development. This recommendation should not be conflated with add-on provisions, such as allowing students to take an upper-level theory elective in jazz or other related area or expanding aural skills coursework to include broader areas while still retaining the conventional theoretical component, which typically carries more hours and course credit. Instead, TFUMM urges that the theory and aural skills sequence be redesigned with the new principles and values at its center.

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*If theory and music history were conceptualized in an integrated fashion using perspectives advanced by TFUMM, opportunities would arise for richer, deeper, more rigorous understanding.*

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A second approach entails a more provocative move, integrating written and aural theory into a broader scope of study and practice. If theory and music history were conceptualized in an integrated fashion using perspectives advanced by TFUMM, opportunities could arise for deeper, more rigorous understanding. This understanding would merge analytical content with historical-cultural content and move from a technical-informational base to an inquiry base so students could discover the

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<sup>12</sup> See Sarath, *ibid*, for more on this discussion, and particularly on the importance of understanding jazz as

“writ large,” as a self-transcending gateway to global practice.

structural, textural, design, and aesthetic dimensions of the sonic experience defined as music. An inquiry-based structure puts more responsibility for factual-informational-technical learning into the hands of students, permitting class time to be used to focus on higher-order analysis and study (somewhat in the mode of the currently popular concept of a “flipped classroom”). Such an approach can provide students with a “need to know” and can make music study more challenging and satisfying. It could also permit integration of creativity, embodied musicianship, critical thinking, community music, reflection, entrepreneurship, technology, aesthetics, and cognition.

A reconceived model of music history studies, for example, might begin with cultural inquiry into the creative process itself. Students could reflect on the creative process—its personal meaning and its relationship to today’s musical world and to the social, cultural, political, and economic conditions beyond music. Students could investigate aesthetic and cognitive concerns, as well as personal, interpersonal, and transcendent dimensions of the creative process. From this point of departure, past practices, conventional musicology, and ethnomusicology could be fathomed in newly relevant ways. This new approach would be in contrast to chronological and geographic organization of music history. Inquiry would be based on the experience of creating music in the 21st-century global landscape and concepts related to that experience. Concepts that might underpin a new model of musicology could include transformations in consciousness during the creative process (or what has been popularized as “flow”), the evolution of a personalized creative voice, or the challenges of authentic synthesis as opposed to superficial skimming in the multicultural marketplace. TFUMM construes this approach as encompassing more than what is typically included under “music history,” and thus TFUMM suggests the initial focus be not on distant eras, but on the day-to-day ordeals and celebrations of creative artists working locally or across the globe.

This approach provides a basis for inquiry into the nature of music, its origins, evolution, and multiple expressions: Why does music sound as it does in particular times and places? Why does music have the influence that it does? Why does music continue to be a primary aspect of human interest and behavior? An entirely new foundation emerges for

conventional, past-based inquiry that enables new levels of appreciation and understanding of the treasures of the past. This new approach embodies a rethinking of the typical division of musicology into historical and ethnomusicological compartments. The productivity and relevance of that division for the 21st century has so far eluded critical inquiry.

A third suggested approach for top-down core curriculum reform is a core proficiency assessment protocol. It could be administered at the end of the second year of college study. Students would need to demonstrate knowledge and skills in a variety of areas corresponding to the reformed framework. Areas could include improvisation, composition, aural skills, modal-tonal pitch languages, rhythmic languages (construed broadly), music technology, and movement. Musical inquiry aptitudes (such as history, cultural understanding, aesthetics, and cognition) could be measured by reflective writing or other protocols. Students could fulfill proficiency requirements independently, place out of core coursework and instead select upper-level course options.

#### *Private lessons*

Private instruction is an important area of music study, and TFUMM sees potential for a broad spectrum of pedagogical practices that could sustain high levels of technique (instrumental or vocal) while contributing to the broader skill set called for by TFUMM. Various approaches to improvisation, aural musicianship, composition, world music performance techniques, and theory could be integrated within the private studio lesson, lessons with multiple students in attendance, or master classes alongside conventional technical and repertory studies. Another possibility is a more fluid private instruction format—not uncommon in jazz, in which students are given the opportunity, most likely in later years of their programs, to study privately with faculty from instrumental categories other than their own principal or primary instrument.

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*Inquiry would be based on  
the experience of creating music  
in the twentieth-first-century  
global landscape*

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## **Ensembles**

Given that much music is performed in ensembles, ensemble experience is important for students. TFUMM recognizes the complex network of considerations related to large ensembles in most music schools and departments. Ensembles are deeply embedded in the cultural history of music schools and public school music programs. While the viability of large classical and jazz ensembles is under threat in professional circumstances, it is clear that school orchestras, choirs, and jazz and wind bands provide excellent performance experiences. Large ensembles also remain an important as community orchestras, bands, and choruses continue to flourish.

It is essential to identify a continuum of ensemble formats and correlate these with real-world experience. For example, small groups in which members improvise and compose are arguably some of the most prevalent ensemble types in the United States and across the globe. In educational settings, small ensembles of improvising musicians in all styles could complement the standard classical chamber music model, or could provide the basis for a new model that achieves new kinds of synthesis.

Recognizing and respecting the highly complicated and highly charged nature of this topic, TFUMM believes that new curricular initiatives rooted in a improviser-composer-performer identity are key to a viable 21st-century ensemble framework.

Two points bear emphasis. A large ensemble—orchestra, choir, or wind band—consisting largely of aspiring contemporary improviser-composer-performers will be capable 1) of playing a wider range of repertory, some of its own making, than an ensemble consisting largely of interpretive performance specialists, and 2) of bringing in unprecedented levels of passion, vitality, appreciation, understanding, and excellence to the performance of the works of Beethoven, Brahms, Debussy, and others, as well as to new repertory.

Contemporary improvisers - composers - performers (whose roots can be traced in part to the European classical tradition) will be able to view the European classical tradition and its treasures through a wide-angled, globally oriented, and creativity-based lens and to situate this lineage in a world music context and invoke deep levels of engagement with their audiences. TFUMM strongly

endorses approaches to large ensemble teaching that incorporate standard and new works, improvisation and other modes of musical engagement and inquiry, and enhanced student participation in decisions related to rehearsal and performance goals. These ensemble approaches are recommended as complementary to, not in place of, systematic improvisation and composition studies elsewhere in the curriculum.

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*Contemporary improvisers-composers-performers will be able to view the European classical tradition and its treasures through a wide-angle, globally oriented and creativity-based lens and to situate this lineage in a contemporary world music context and invoke deeper levels of engagement with their audiences*

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This ensemble strategy exhibits strong viability and sheds light on the seemingly conflicting need for curricular space for aspiring artists who will populate these ensembles to devote time to an expanded and integrative skill set. Increased ensemble rehearsal time might seem self-defeating, but aspiring creative musicians will bring enlivened scope and passion to the large ensemble framework. Like all other aspects of the curriculum, modifications may be needed to place the development of the (re)emergent and broadened artistic profile front and center.

## **Curricular upper structure**

The combination of breadth, integration, rigor, and creative exploration provided in the reformed core curriculum offer students a foundation that will be conducive to self-directed development. The upper structure of the curriculum, *i.e.*, typically the “upper division coursework,” which may or may not coincide with particular years of study, based on this foundation could incorporate an array of options, including coursework previously deemed part of the core and new courses that cut across traditional boundaries. It is important to keep in mind that a curricular paradigm that expands

options for students can also enliven and expand creative avenues for faculty. There are many possibilities:

- a technology-mediated class that unites contemporary trends and centuries-old practices
- a class exploring time, cognition, and consciousness
- a course in Dalcroze eurhythmics, Laban, modern dance, or creative movement, any of which provide the physical engagement of the body in response to music and invite movement that expresses or emanates from musical ideas
- a course exploring improvisation across Western and Eastern genres
- a course uniting meditation and movement
- a seminar in the neurological correlates of performance, participation, and listening
- a project-oriented course that connects students to community musicians or venues and facilitates music for diverse audiences, like children, seniors, or differently-abled populations

Within the proposed creative frame, it is expected that students will continue to develop their individual and ensemble performance skills and advance their work in domains such as musicology, music teacher education, music therapy, theory, and other conventional fields. It is also expected that many more integrative opportunities could arise, opportunities that combine diverse areas of interest within and beyond music, which would be consistent with musical developments outside the academy. Students live in an age of advancing technology, instantaneous global information, awareness of growing demographic diversity, and an unending array of musical expressions. They seek connections and relationships in their studies that will enhance and enrich their contributions. Music students sometimes seek double majors or other opportunities to combine music with other fields of study. Mechanisms should be developed to assure that the greatest possible learning will accrue from students' chosen trajectories.

#### ***New degree program and unit***

TFUMM recognizes and supports the autonomy of institutions relative to their own contexts, profiles, and inclinations to change. While TFUMM has taken

a broad and radical approach to transforming the undergraduate music major curriculum, a variety of change strategies could be employed within the spirit of these recommendations. Some programs may have a few faculty interested in piloting certain aspects of the recommendations; others may open full-faculty dialogues about change and its implications. The most important element of change is a philosophical commitment to serving 21st-century musicians, the art of music, our communities, and our society. This commitment requires a rigorous music education that focuses on creativity and relevance in the world beyond the academy.

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*The most important element of change is a philosophical commitment to serving 21st-century musicians, the art of music, our communities, and our society.*

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An approach that may be viable in some schools or departments involves establishing a degree track that embodies the TFUMM vision as a pilot program. The degree track could be overseen by a new unit—a department, area, or division—that involves existing faculty whose work aligns with the TFUMM vision. This cross-disciplinary approach conforms with a movement in higher education generally that seeks to diversify and integrate faculty units and collaborative efforts, moving beyond the isolationist identification of faculty only with others in their own disciplines and moving toward faculty organizing around more holistic themes, such as creativity.

The value of creating a specified degree track is that it can shift the overarching identity for students and faculty involved in that track. A new degree track could provide a cohort of students and faculty with the overarching identity of a contemporary improviser-composer-performer. The creation of a new faculty unit could help promote an identity shift among faculty, similar to what is being promoted among students. TFUMM argues, however, that the improviser-composer-performer identity should not be limited only to students who elect the new degree track, but should be available to all students. Students from any major should be able to identify as a contemporary improviser-composer-performer. In fact, such a shift in identity could be as crucial for students planning to teach as it is for students

focused on performance. It is possible that the faculty unit piloting a new degree focused specifically on creativity could also offer student-designed minors or other mechanisms to assure the availability of this identity to all students.

A new degree track and unit (perhaps called Contemporary Creative Musicianship) would appeal to a variety of constituencies and could have positive recruiting ramifications for institutions committed to paradigmatic change and leadership in the field. Those attracted might include string players who want to combine standard repertory with contemporary creative explorations for string quartets, including improvisation and arrangements and compositions by group members. Other constituencies might include jazz students seeking the broad horizons embraced in the jazz world; music technology and popular music students who play a handful of instruments and traverse multiple stylistic boundaries; or students who identify as “world music” practitioners. In the proposed curriculum, students would benefit from a reformed core curriculum that integrates musicianship and musicology classes; expands approaches to private instruction; enables them to chart their own pathways through wide-ranging options; and centers the ensemble program on small creative music ensembles, where students compose most of the music and have space for improvisation.

### **Teacher certification option**

A teacher certification option in the contemporary improviser-composer-performer vein could be placed within the proposed degree track or incorporated as a dimension of a more traditional music teacher curriculum. A contemporary improviser-composer-performer emphasis in a teaching certificate would expose aspiring music teachers to a new paradigm for public school music, which could include conventional large ensembles (which currently prevail in public school music programs), but it need not be limited to that approach. Under the proposed certificate program, aspiring teachers would gain performance skills drawn from a diversity of local and global cultures—from blues to bluegrass, from gospel choir to *kulintang*, from *samulnori* to *son jarocho*. With strong creative grounding, these teachers would be able to invent new musical expressions based on a diversity of elemental features and nuances.

TFUMM imagines the proposed foundational shift would occur through a reformed curriculum and by infusing such knowledge and skills throughout existing methods courses, so that students would not be burdened with a fifth year of study. The proposed music teaching program is imagined as streamlined, relevant, highly integrated, and resonant with the overarching paradigm shift in the music major program at large. It could resolve longstanding questions about the increasing number of course requirements and their relevance to musicianship and pedagogical excellence. Rather than responding to certification mandates by designing new courses, new requirements could be woven into current courses. Cultivating high levels of ability in improvisation, composition, and performance will directly and powerfully enhance music pedagogy.

The TFUMM vision also lays groundwork for new levels of pedagogical expertise by restoring the creative foundations of artistic development to musical education. When musical artistry is reconceived from the conventional interpretive performance model to the improviser-composer-performer model, the false dichotomy between musical and pedagogical expertise is resolved: one cannot have the second without the first.

Change in the education of music teachers should thus be a high priority, given the dichotomy between professional assertions that the arts are basic and the small percentage of students who actually participate in high school ensemble programs. Out-of-school participation rates in music suggest that large numbers of students are engaged in self-initiated and informal music performance and study. However, in-school participation rates have remained the same for many years and indicate a need for music learning experiences that reach larger numbers of students, particularly in secondary schools. TFUMM believes that expanding the profile of 21st-century musicians and music teachers as advocated here will have direct bearing on student involvement in school music programs.

Any curriculum innovation affecting teacher certification programs will face challenges in the form of state and school of education standards and requirements. TFUMM recommends that advocates pursue sustained conversations with school of education colleagues and state certification officials. In these conversations, it will be important to make



the provision for faculty units to have creative latitude in delineating the curricular needs of students. The proposed paradigm allows music education faculty to make significant strides toward a more relevant and efficient curricular framework, enabling needed diversification and allowing school music programs to enhance the holistic development of all students.

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*The most important element of change is a philosophical commitment to serving 21st-century musicians, the art of music, our communities, and our society.*

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### **Music and human learning**

TFUMM believes that the current paradigm for university-level music study (focused as it is on European classical music and interpretive performance), significantly underestimates the value of music to human life — intellectually, emotionally, and socially. On the contrary, TFUMM finds indicators coming from a variety of academic disciplines and venues that show a burgeoning interest in music cognition, neuromusical processing, and the impact of music on human health and well-being. The impressive literature that offers an understanding of music and human life and learning should inform not only students' experience and development, but also the reform discourse advocated here. Faculty forums, retreats, study groups, expert-led workshops, and other mechanisms could be used to enlarge faculty members' understanding in these arenas.

### **New curriculum oversight protocol**

The proposed curriculum change suggests a need for change in curriculum approval processes. TFUMM endorses a greater degree of field-specific responsibility for determining the curriculum of concentrations within the music major, in areas such as theory, history, performance, or creative studies. TFUMM proposes that centralized curriculum committees should deal primarily with structural and organizational issues and entrust course content and distribution issues to faculty with expertise in the given domains. Curriculum committees should, of course, review change proposals with an eye to the validity of justifications, an emphasis on students' learning, and the relevance to

students' readiness for careers and leadership. Curriculum committees could also look at school-wide issues such as overlap in courses, competing requirements, number of program hours, credit policies, etc. However, once guiding principles have been established, faculty in the domain should be charged with responsible implementation of the curricula.

### **Summary of Institutional-level Initiatives**

To summarize, TFUMM proposes a three-pronged protocol for practical initiatives at the institutional level: sustain a high level of critical discourse; invoke option-rich strategies for change that allow students greater choice in their curricular pathways; and initiate institution-driven innovations in the form of new coursework, degree programs, and curricular oversight protocols. Ideally, aspects of the three prongs will work in concert. However, schools and departments are encouraged to focus in whatever areas they are inclined, and to pursue creative alternatives that fit their unique circumstances. Most important is that the self-organizing, creativity-driven development that TFUMM advocates on the *student* level is also manifested on the *institutional* level, which will ensure that even the most modest steps toward change move toward foundational overhaul.

### **PATHWAYS TO CHANGE II: NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL**

When the institutional changes mentioned above occur in tandem with national and international changes, the prospects for foundational overhaul of music curriculum become more viable. To leverage the pioneering efforts of an initial wave of leading institutions toward a broader transformation, a series of national and international change strategies will be needed. These strategies will in turn enhance and empower local efforts. Following are three suggestions for national/international actions: a change consortium, change conferences, and new accreditation protocols.

### **Change Consortium**

A wide range of organizations devote themselves to music study. Many of these organizations have issued appeals for change in varying degrees, and some have implemented changes that resonate with TFUMM recommendations. However, no larger

organization is, as yet, predicated on change. TFUMM believes a new organization is needed, one whose entire focus is the transformation of university-level musical study. This organization (which need not be conceived as a CMS or TFUMM project) could work on multiple levels. This high-level, change-oriented group might take the following actions:

- Form a national/international network of faculty and students committed to change in the field
- Identify ten or more initial sites for implementation of the new model
- Engage progressive public school music teachers in the change discussion
- Engage progressive school principals and superintendents in the conversation to enliven receptivity to new models of school music engagement, learning, teaching, or inquiry
- Engage deans, provosts, chancellors, and presidents in the conversation, particularly under the auspices of diversity, which most of them already champion
- Convene think tanks with representatives of varied constituencies

- Form a consulting team to visit sites and assist with implementation
- Provide summer workshops for colleagues who wish to gain skill in facilitating the new model

All these actions could help initiate and support widespread, lasting, paradigmatic change within university-based music education.

### **Change Conferences**

A series of national and international gatherings could serve as high-impact events to support the proposed shift in values and curricular content. A conference title such as “Breaking the Logjam: Paradigmatic Change in a Field at Risk” would begin to set expectations for outcomes from such conferences.

### **New Accreditation Protocols: NASM**

Systemic change in the field of music will never transpire without corresponding change in accreditation criteria. Those who support the proposed paradigm shift must work with the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) to ensure that institutions so inclined are incentivized to break free from the conventional mold.

### III. CONCLUSION: A CALL FOR LEADERSHIP

An extraordinary opportunity awaits individuals and institutions committed to transforming music study into a force for creativity, diversity, integration, and transformation; a force that can benefit a world in urgent need. Though the rationale for this kind of reform might be obvious in light of the global nature of today's musical and societal landscapes, TFUMM, makes the case that European classical music has much to gain from such reform. Key to TFUMM's proposed vision is restoring the creative template that prevailed in the European tradition through the mid-nineteenth century, and which has profound ramifications for multi- and transcultural navigation in the 21st century.

TFUMM also argues that the proposed transformation of music study offers potential to shape a new generation of artists-visionaries who may then transmit their broad and transformative wisdom to society and positively impact many of the most pressing issues of our times: ecological crises, poverty, famine, disease, violence against women, child abuse, ideological and extremist tensions, the threat and manifestation of war and violence. The time has come for a world that is also brimming with beauty, ingenuity, connection, and peaceful interchange through the transformative power of music, which potentially connects all cultures. The field of music study has the capacity to contribute significantly to global transformation, provided it invokes its own internal, foundational rebuilding around principles that are adequate to this task.

TFUMM has identified what it believes are the most essential features of music and human creative experience, has provided an analysis of the prevailing model's constraints, and has identified a far-reaching vision for the future of music study.

TFUMM advocates a shift from additive adjustments toward a creativity-driven, diversity-rich, and integrative curricular model that can enliven strong, self-organizing capacities in students and institutions. TFUMM also suggests a multi-tiered change protocol that surpasses in scope anything that has come before it. Thus TFUMM hopes to alter the tide of reform discourse in the field. Our hope is to break the logjam of pseudo-change that has pervaded the curricular reform movement and the broader field.

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All who are willing to step outside their comfort zones, critically examine the prevailing model, and entertain and celebrate new visions of the possible are invited to join with us in this critically significant project.

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*All who are willing to step outside their comfort zones, critically examine the prevailing model, and entertain and celebrate new visions of the possible are invited to join with us in this historically significant project.*

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## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

- Music schools and departments should sustain a high level of critical discourse about the purposes and potentials of music study. Discussion should be informed by far-reaching questions, corresponding literature, and a commitment to critical evaluation of assumptions and practices within the conventional model. *Creativity, diversity, and integration* may provide uniquely powerful lenses to focus and deepen discussion about more meaningful musical education.

TFUMM further recommends that music schools and departments consider the following:

- Bottom-up, self-organizing strategies for change that provide students with expanded options for navigating their artistic pathways. These bottom-up strategies might also allow faculty greater latitude to determine the curricular needs of their student constituencies, with the goal of the aspiring, contemporary, improviser-composer-performer in mind.
- Top-down strategies (implemented in conjunction with bottom-up provisions) that involve careful course and curricular design informed by the needs of the contemporary improviser-composer-performer in a global society. TFUMM urges that top-down processes be driven by an openness to new ways of thinking about the music core curriculum and by a receptivity to less conventionally recognized studies such as improvisation, composition, movement, rhythm, or mind-body practice.
- New possibilities regarding applied instrumental or vocal study geared toward the skill set of a 21st-century improviser-composer-performer. Possibilities might include more improvisation in lessons, more small-group instruction, or other avenues of achieving even greater skill development than in strictly private-lesson contexts.
- New possibilities in large-ensemble instruction and format oriented toward the needs of a 21st-century improviser-composer-performer and toward the potential for students' emergent artistic identity to open new programming possibilities and bring new levels of vitality, meaning, and understanding to the standard large-ensemble repertory.
- New conceptions of the 21st-century public school music teacher informed by the contemporary improviser-performer-composer model and encompassing opportunities for diversity and integration within the certification program.
- Implementation of pilot degree programs that embody the new principles as a preliminary pathway toward institutional reform.
- Joint initiatives with national and international groups or programs in the quest for broad and progressive change in the culture of music study. Broad initiatives would then enhance localized initiatives.